

Increasing Housing Sustainability by Assisting Veterans Obtain Timely VA Benefits



Introductions



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Coming Together: Facing the Future”

Purpose Built Families Foundation’s Operation Sacred Trust SSVF program’s collaboration with local Veterans chapters is an innovative “coming together” approach that is having a significant, measurable impact delivering timely veteran benefits outcomes to dramatically expand options for ending homelessness.

- The collaboration has led to the agency’s frontline staff to begin the process to be trained as Veteran Service Officers with ultimate hope to become accredited agents.
- A vast number of veterans who enter the SSVF program are unaware that they may be eligible for VA benefits and what benefits are available.
- Many veterans who reached the SSVF program with zero income have exited within 90 days with up to 100% disability compensation as well as other benefits such as aid and attendance, and VA pension.

Objectives

- Learn How to Partner with local veterans' organizations
- Learn How to assist veterans file their own benefits claims
- Obtain an Understanding that an increase in benefits provides improved long term housing sustainability
- Discuss Future-Goals/plan for VA benefits accreditation

Purpose Built Families Approach to Obtaining VA Benefit

Holistic approach to empower veterans on how to navigate applying for VA benefits

Assist with referrals to community Veterans' Services Organizations (VSO) and Attorneys for those Veterans who require more in-depth assistance

All veterans who walk through PBF doors are screened by a team member dedicated to helping veterans explore means of financial stability .

VA Definition of Veteran

38 U.S.C. § 101(2) provides:

The term "veteran" means a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released there from under conditions other than dishonorable.

38 U.S.C. § 101(21) provides:

The term "active duty" means—

(A) full-time duty in the Armed Forces, other than active duty for training;

(B) full-time duty (other than for training purposes) as a commissioned officer of the Regular or Reserve Corps of the Public Health Service (i) on or after July 29, 1945, or before that date under circumstances affording entitlement to "full military benefits" or at any time, for the purposes of chapter 13 of this

Discharges Characteristics

Honorable

Service member that met the standards of acceptable conduct and performance.

Dishonorable

Service record is satisfactory but not sufficiently meritorious to warrant a fully honorable discharge.

Uncharacterized

Typically applies to those who leave the military within first 180 days.

Other than Honorable

Service record shows some misconduct, but not with a court-martial conviction.

Bad Conduct

Requires conviction by court-martial (may be Special Court-Martial).

Dishonorable

Requires conviction by General Court Martial. Comparable to a civilian felony-level offense.

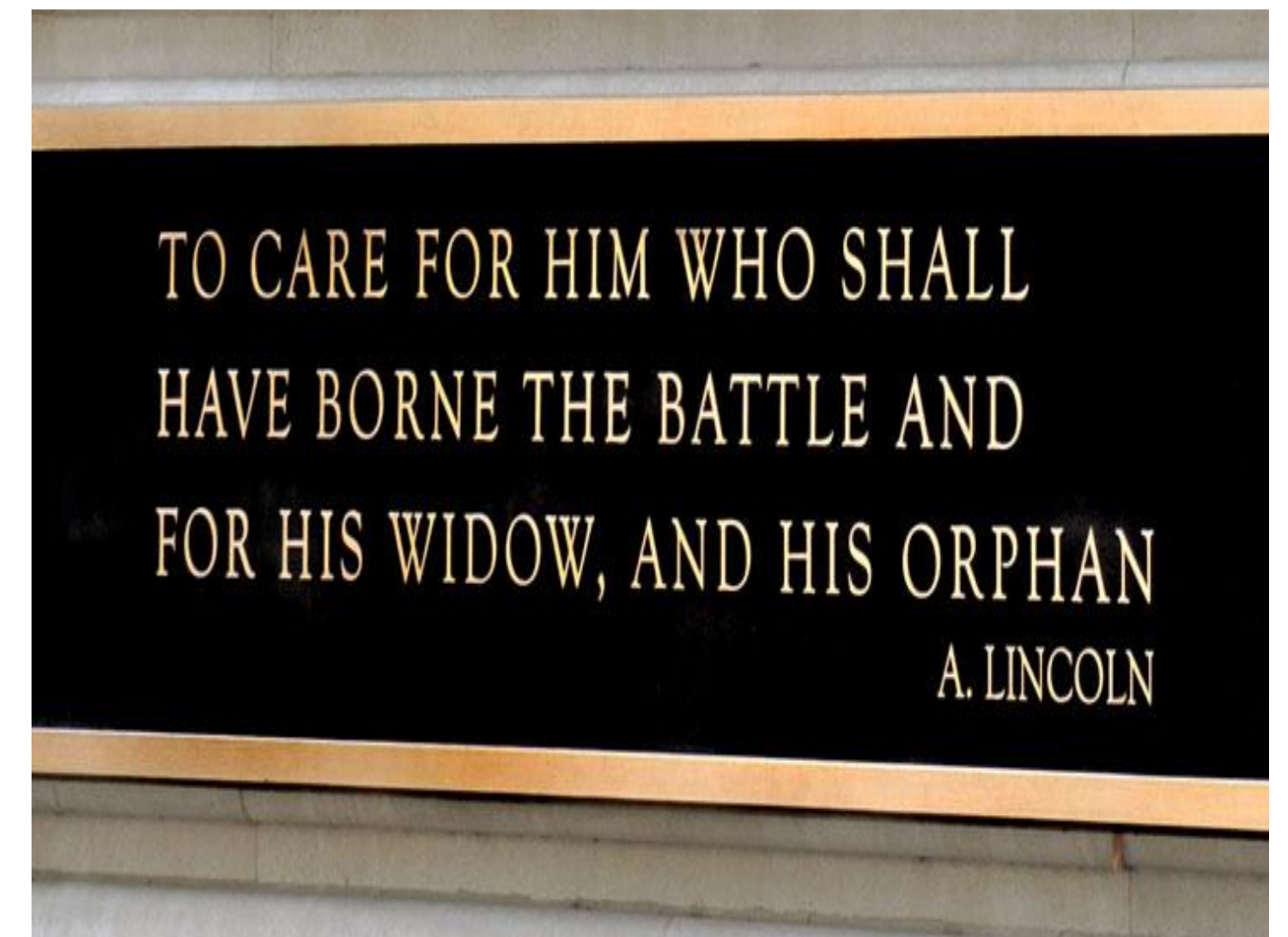
Discharge Types Eligible for VA Benefits

- Honorable
- General under Honorable
- Uncharacterized
- Other than Honorable
- Bad Conduct (by way of Special Court-Martial)
- Dishonorable or Bad Conduct by way of General Court-Martial are barred from all VA Benefits

*Remember-An unfavorable discharge can be appealed by an attorney with the intent to obtain a discharge rating that would then be eligible for VA benefits.

Types of VA Benefits

- Veterans Health Administration (VHA)-Medical benefits
- Service-Connected Compensation (through Veterans Benefits Administration, VBA)
- Non-Service Connected Pension (VBA) or Wartime Pension
- Aid and Attendance (VA)
- VR&E (Veteran Readiness and Employment-Chapter 31)
- VA Home Loan Certificate



Service-Connected Compensation-What is it?

- A monthly cash benefit for veterans who have a current physical or mental health condition that was incurred or aggravated during their active military service, and the health condition is not the result of the veteran's willful misconduct.
- Receipt comes with automatic health care priority and other VA services/benefits.
- Provides lifelong, non-taxable income awarded on a percentage basis called a rating of (0%-100%)
- Rating based on physical or mental health exam conducted by an independent VA contracted physician (known as C & P Exam).

What is VA Pension?

Pension is a needs-based benefit program for wartime Veterans, who are age 65 or older or have a permanent and total **non-service connected disability**, and who have limited income and net worth.

Veterans who are more seriously disabled may qualify for pension at the increased housebound or aid and attendance rates.

Veteran must have served at least 1 day during wartime and meets minimum time in service requirement

Wartime periods are defined as:

- Mexican Border period (May 9, 1916, to April 5, 1917, for Veterans who served in Mexico, on its borders, or in adjacent waters)
- World War I (April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918)
- World War II (December 7, 1941, to December 31, 1946)
- Korean conflict (June 27, 1950, to January 31, 1955)
- Vietnam War era (November 1, 1955, to May 7, 1975, for Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam during that period. August 5, 1964, to May 7, 1975, for Veterans who served outside the Republic of Vietnam.)
- Gulf War (August 2, 1990, through a future date to be set by law or presidential proclamation)

How do PBF Team Members Empower Veterans to Apply for VA Benefits

- Advocate for Veteran
- Educate veterans on types of benefits and application process
- Provide veterans with local VSO locations and contact information
- Refer veterans to local VSOs for assistance with benefits application
- Teach veterans how to navigate VA website so that they can apply for benefits online
- Teach veterans how to sign up for VA benefits website and healthcare accounts
- Inform veterans on how to request military records (i.e. DD214)
- Provide access to computers and assist with utilizing technology
- Refer veteran to Health Care Navigator to assist with obtaining veterans' medical records
- Once claims are submitted, assist with following up on claim status, tracking case status

Outcomes

- Claims opened-292 veterans submitted claims within the last year
- \$2.2 Million awarded in Compensation, Pension, & Aid and Attendance with short turnaround
- Increased Veterans' sustainable income resulting in veterans remaining stably housed.
- Decreased recidivism and returning to homelessness.

One unique recent accomplishment was PBFF's success helping a Veteran with an Other than Honorable Discharge obtain 40% VA Service-Connected benefits; a challenge never accomplished previously by the agency, or to our knowledge, any of our community partners. Like many of the other Veterans successfully helped by PBFF since Dr. Lawrence began providing mentorship, training, and assistance, the Veteran had been denied benefits for multiple decades prior to the successful result PBFF's support helped make possible

Success Story - Video



PBFF Future Goal : Becoming Accredited Agents

As a result of the success of empowering veterans to apply for VA benefits. PBFF benefits team will be starting the process to get accredited

- VA accreditation program exists to ensure that Veterans and their family members receive appropriate representation on their VA benefits claims. VA accreditation is for the sole and limited purpose of preparing, presenting, and prosecuting claims before VA.
- An individual generally must first be accredited by VA to assist a claimant in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of a claim for VA benefits—even without charge.
- 1 VA accredits three types of individuals for this purpose: - - -
Representatives of VA-recognized veterans service organizations (VSO)
- 2 Attorneys (accredited in their individual capacity, not through a law firm)
- 3 Claims agents (accredited in their individual capacity, not through an organization)

Accreditation FAQs

- How long will it take to process my application?

Attorney applications generally take between 60 to 120 days from submission. Because there are more steps involved with claim agent applications, those applications take, on average, 1 year to process.

- Can I be accredited to help veterans with their claims if I am a federal employee?

No. An employee of the Federal government generally cannot provide representational services before VA. However, if you are currently serving in a Reserve component of the Armed Forces, you are not considered a Federal employee as long as you are not on active duty or active duty for training.

- May an accredited attorney or claims agent charge fees for preparing an initial VA claim?

No. An accredited attorney or claims agent may generally charge claimants a fee only after an agency of original jurisdiction (e.g., a VA regional office) has issued a decision on a claim, a notice of disagreement has been filed, and the attorney or agent has filed a power of attorney and a fee agreement with VA.